

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
PIGEON RIVER COUNTRY EQUESTRIAN COMMITTEE
JANUARY 8, 2013**

A meeting of the PRCEC was held on Tuesday, January 8, 2013 at the DNR/DEQ Office in Gaylord. Chairman Dick Kleinhardt called the meeting to order at 1:00.

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Walters, Dick Kleinhardt, Kerry Mase, Chuck Fanslow, Barb Curtis, Norma Laine, Don Horrocks, Bonnie Cornelius, Carol Clute, Darlene Alexander, and Carol Hyzer

MEMBERS ABSENT: Vickie Reinhardt and Charlotte Prochazka

EX-OFFICIO PRESENT: Scott Whitcomb, Pigeon River Country State Forest Manager

OTHERS PRESENT: Joe Hall, Clear Lake State Park, Keith Cheli, PRD Planner, Brian Mastenbrook, DNR Wildlife Biologist, Charlie Maltby, Otsego State Park, Tom Hatfield, Special Assistant to Congressman Benicheck, Connie Kleinhardt

The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM CHAIRS: Dick Kleinhardt reported that Bonnie Cornelius, Carol Hyzer, and Darlene Alexander had received letters from DNR Director Creagh appointing them to the PRCEC. Dick bid them an official welcome.

Co-Chair, John Walters, informed the group that the December 20th snow storm has caused extensive blockage from downed trees and branches on almost all the trails in the PRCSF. Darlene Alexander and Kerry Mase will work on notifying horse clubs that use the group campground and the horse trails about the need for spring work bees to open the horse trails back up. They will work with these groups to schedule work bees. Volunteer use permits will need to be applied for through Scott Whitcomb.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: A **Motion** to accept the minutes was made by Dick Kleinhardt and seconded by Carol Clute. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 5, 2012 MEETING MINUTES: A **Motion** to accept the October 5th minutes was made by Chuck Fanslow and seconded by Carol Clute. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

Progress And Time Line For Completion Of Elk Hill Campground

Charlie Maltby reported that the construction crew would be working on completion of Phase I upgrades at the Elk Hill Equestrian Trail Campground this July with completion by August. The campground will remain open during construction. Phase I includes:

- 1) Construction of a new "buddy site" which is two sites that face each other.
- 2) Dividing the longest pull through site into two sites.

- 3) Removal of the old outhouses with new ones placed over the existing vaults.
- 4) The additional new well will be bid out to a private contractor. Whether this would be a solar or generator operated well is not known at this time.
- 5) Charlie will be applying to the DEQ for a license that would increase the number of camping sites from the current ten.

Forest Management Plan for Signage

Scott reported that to be consistent with the ORV trails policy in the Lower Peninsula (“trails are closed unless designated as open”) and for ease of identification, designation and enforcement that it is recommended that the equestrian trails in the PRCSF should follow the same policy. Initially, when the restrictions were put in place, the “no horse” signs were felt to be necessary in order to inform equestrians of the trails that had been closed. It is felt now that these signs can be removed and that the policy of “closed unless designated as open” can be followed. There was much discussion regarding whether the policy of “closed unless designated as open” was the best user friendly policy. All county roads and forest roads that are open for vehicles are open for recreational users and do not need to be individually signed as being open for each recreational use. Those portions of the horse trails that are not part of a road system would be signed as open to horses. The trails policy will be discussed further at our next meeting.

Scott also reported that he wanted all of the missing 4 by 4 post used in the forest, marking all of the numbered forest roads' intersections, be replaced. Many are missing and the ones that remain need to have their road number signs replaced. These numbered roads would appear on the Forest Road Access and the Recreational Trails Access maps available to the public to be used for travel within the forest.

Scott would like the Signage Committee (Charlotte Prochazka and Vickie Reinhardt) to map out a half dozen of the riding loops that are already in existence and other riding loops of various lengths that our group can recommend. He would like to have an idea of the approximate lengths of these different loop rides. These loops could be color coded on a map with GPS coordinates. Maps would then be available on line and at the field office (and possibly at the kiosk at the campgrounds). Funding for maps is an issue. Carol Hyzer shared that in another park they laminated maps and sold them to help cover costs for the maps. Scott would also consider using color signs in the forest (paint on trees or signs). There was a lot of discussion at the meeting about signage. Some felt signs only at intersections was needed while others thought that some additional signage on longer stretches was needed. Scott will be working with Charlotte Prochazka and Vickie Reinhardt on the loop trails and signage. He said he would like our group to then field test these routes and then we could fine tune the signage that is needed on them.

Scott also showed mock ups of different signs that are under consideration to be placed on the entrance roads to PRCSF at the six sites approved of by the PRAC. The main welcoming sign would be consistent in design with the design used by Parks and

Recreation. The “Caution Other Recreational Users” signs would look more like the typical Forest Division signs. Final wording and design has not yet been made, but should be finalized by this spring.

Speed Limit Reduction:

Both this committee and the PRAC have voted in support of reducing the speed limit on the county roads in PRCSE. Don Horrocks tells us that the next step is to have Director Creagh contact the State Police Commander in Lansing. We heard earlier (last October) from Donna Stine that the Director “was willing to have that conversation”. Scott will follow up with the Director.

Replacement Of Dubey Lake Horse Camping Site:

Last fall several members did road tours with a truck, studied maps and talked to Scott about a suitable replacement site for Dubey Lake. It was decided that the best location on land that was not purchased with license fee money, was the old oil well pumping station. The access is off of the Hardwood Lake road, close to the Tin Shanty road junction. The Shore to Shore trail runs along its East border. There is plenty of room for the four allowed rigs and tall trees for tethering and shade.

A **Motion** was made by Norma Laine, seconded by Darlene Alexander that the old oil well pumping station site replace the Dubey Lake site. Motion carried. Scott Whitcomb said that a new Land Use Order would have to be signed making this change. The old access road to this site would have to be reopened.

Campground North Of PRCSE

On November 29, 2012 several members of the PRCEC, the Chair of the ETS and DNR staff from Forest and Parks and Recreation Divisions met to discuss either the creation of a new campground north of PRCSE or upgrading the current Stoney Creek Campground. The consensus of this group was to upgrade the Stoney Creek Campground. A summary of the discussion was sent to all PRCEC members for consideration.

A **Motion** was made by John Walters, seconded by Carol Clute that the PRCEC recommends that the DNR Forest and Parks and Recreation Divisions improve the quality of the sites at Stoney Creek for easier access and camping. Motion carried.

A **Motion** was made by John Walters, seconded by Carol Clute recommending that the DNR encourage Cheboygan County Road Commission to improve the county road access to the Stoney Creek Campground. Motion carried

MDNR Proposed Equine Access Plan

The MDNR is taking steps to address the issues raised by the USFWS in regard to not only the equine access proposals, but all types of campgrounds and all types of recreational and commercial use that takes place on PRCSE lands purchased with license fee money. According to the USFWS, activities that take place on license fee acquired

lands need to have a fish and/or wildlife purpose. There is a different standard for Pittman Robertson funds which allows an activity if it does not conflict with the fish and game purpose. The license fee monies however have a higher, more restrictive standard. Harm is not the issue, but rather does the activity that takes place on license fee acquired lands have a fish and/or wildlife purpose? Brian Mastenbrook, DNR Wildlife Biologist is currently working on a draft of the MI Wildlife Management Plan for PRCSF that will be addressing these issues.

NEW BUSINESS:

Clear Lake State Park Equestrian Campground.

On November 29, 2012 after the meeting at Stoney Creek, the members of the PRCEC, the Chair of ETS and Parks and Recreation Staff met at Clear Lake State Park. Anna Sylvester and Joe Hall, Supervisor of Clear Lake State Park, offered to develop an equestrian campground at the Park. A tour of the area where the campground would be located was made. The consensus of this group was to support development of an equestrian campground at the Park. A summary of this meeting was sent to all members of the PRCEC for consideration.

A **Motion** was made by John Walters, seconded by Chuck Fanslow, that the PRCEC work with the DNR to ensure that an equestrian campground go forward at Clear Lake State Park. Motion carried.

Following the PRCEC meeting a conceptual planning meeting was held with Keith Cheli, PRD Planner and Joe Hall, Supervisor of Clear Lake State Park.

Changes in reservation method for group equestrian campgrounds

Charlie Maltby, Supervisor of Otsego State Park reported that reservations for the equestrian group camps will now go through Parks and Recreation. He will be taking reservations for the Elk Hill Equestrian Group Campground and the Johnson Crossing Group Campground. Reservations can be made Monday thru Friday, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. The number to call is 989-732-5485. A minimum of five people is needed to reserve in the group campground at Elk Hill and Johnson Crossing. The reservation fee is \$8 and each person is \$6 per night. The camping fee is paid up front.

Reservations for the smaller Elk Hill Equestrian State Forest Campground can still be made on line at www.midnrreservations.com (listed under Elk Hill Equestrian Pigeon River) or by calling 1-800-447-2757. The reservation fee is \$8 and the camping fee is \$17.00 per night. One rig per site. Up to five sites can be reserved with the remaining sites being available on a first come first serve basis.

Comments From Committee Members

Gladwin

Chuck Fanslow gave an update on the re-opening of Gladwin to horses. There will be 10 to 12 horse camping sites and horse trails will be clean up and reopened on this 1200 acre parcel.

Black River Access

At the October 12th Advisory Council meeting it was reported that the access path to the Black River at Tin Shanty bridge had been damaged by horses. Kerry Mase contacted Chuck Fanslow, Chair of MTRA about this. Chuck in turn contacted Tim Cwalinski, DNR Fisheries. In 1999 when the new bridge was built, the MTRA, in cooperation with the DNR, constructed this access path made from Geo-Webbing for use by not only horses but all recreational users accessing the river at this site. MTRA asks the DNR to contact them about areas of concern or the need for repairs at horse access sites. MTRA is glad to work hand in hand with all agencies to make improvements so that all users have access. Plans are being made by MTRA, to repair this access site.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- 1) Election of Chair, Co-Chair and Secretary.
- 2) Does the PRCEC support the policy of “closed unless designated open” for PRCSF horse trails? - John Walters
- 3) Draft of Wildlife Management Plan – Brian Mastenbrook

ADJOURN Meeting was adjourned at 3:30

Respectfully Submitted,

Kerry K. Mase
Secretary